



## 2022 3Q In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 8 Seeing the Invisible

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

### SABBATH

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The lesson asks, “How can we be sure about what we do not see?”

- Do you have any confidence or faith that radio waves exist? Why?
- Do you have any confidence or faith that radiation is real? Why?

Upon what have you based your faith in the existence of these things you cannot see?

What about our faith in God? Is there evidence for the existence of God? What evidence?

since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:20 NIV84).

What evidence is there from nature of God’s eternal power and existence?

- The complexity of life itself
- The testable premises of life (complexity never happens randomly, it requires the input of an intelligence; life never comes from non-living matter, only from living organisms)
- The testable laws upon which life is built are fine tuned to sustain life and if any single one of them were to be changed in the slightest life as we know could not exist
- The testable moral laws, like the law of love, liberty, truth, exertion, restoration etc.
- The coded information in the DNA and RNA of all living organisms. There is no naturalistic explanation for information coding itself—and all thinking persons know this.

Thus, those who continue to promote godless theories of existence are the ones who operate outside objective reality, who deny evidence, and who advance belief systems that are superstitious, and require the suspension of reason.

But the delusion of godless evolution is so deeply imbedded into the accepted orthodoxy of modern education and science that it is almost never questioned.

The people who believe and teach this are blind guides leading more blind people to beliefs based on claims and proclamations that require the rejection of objective evidence. And it is this same type of denial of evidence, of rejection of design laws, of accepting authority of office, of position, of credentials, that governed the Dark Ages church in its abuses of people and which has been behind the entire COVID mandates and human rights abuses and exploitation. And you see the same hostile



response that Reformers received from the Dark Ages church leveled against the those calling for truth in regard to the COVID and godless evolution misinformation.

In addition to the evidence of God built into the created order, we also have Scripture with its revelation of God, including God's foreknowledge evidenced in prophecy; the character of God revealed most clearly in the life of Jesus; and the plan of salvation.

And, we also can add to this our personal life experiences with God, harmonizing all three science, Scripture, and experience leads to solid reality based understanding of truth and the truth leads us back to our infinite God of love who values nothing higher than the freedom of His intelligent creatures that our loyalty to Him may be freely given.

## SUNDAY

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Read first paragraph, "If God really loved me..." Have you ever thought this? Have you known people who have?

What is the problem with this type of thinking? What does it reveal?

It reveals that the person who says this doesn't truly know the heart of God and how much God loves them. If they did, then in trying circumstances they would say something like, "I know God loves me, but I just don't know why this is happening, why He is allowing this. It doesn't make sense." That is exactly how Job thought when he suffered at Satan's hand.

That is a right and reasonable question anyone might ask in our finite existence, even for those who do know God and know that God loves them. We even hear and echo of such a question by Jesus on the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" But Jesus never questioned God's love for Him.

But what does questioning God's love for us often lead to? Could it lead to other questions, like, "What sin did I commit that God is punishing me?"

Read third paragraph, "In Romans 8:32..." Do you like this rendering in *The Message*? It is very nicely done.

What is your answer to the lesson's question, "How could we possible think that God would send Jesus to die for us and then turn mean and stingy?"

Could it have anything to do with why we believe Jesus died for us?

Could the law lens we explain Jesus' death through impact how we see God?



The Roman church became infected with the Roman view of God's law, the idea that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules that require the rule-giver to use power to punish and enforce rule-breaking. In this false law model, God becomes the source of suffering and death inflicted as punishment for sin upon sinners and thus Jesus' death is presented as a means to persuade God, appease God, propitiate God, influence God, legally pay God or God's law so that the ruler won't use power to torture and kill us.

Here are some quotations from various religious traditions documenting that our understanding of God has become infected with the human law model—and these statements document very clearly why people think that God sent Jesus but is still mean and stingy:

- What did Christ's suffering and death actually accomplish that allowed the Father to provide the human race with salvation? ... Scripture teaches only that Christ became a 'propitiation,' a 'sin offering,' or a 'sacrifice' for sins...Essentially, this means that Christ, because he was guiltless, sin-free and in favor with God, **could offer himself up as a means of persuading God to relent of his angry wrath** against the sins of mankind... Anger against sin shows the personal side of God, for sin is a personal offense against him... **God is personally offended by sin and thus he needs to be personally appeased** in order to offer a personal forgiveness. In keeping with his divine principles, his personal nature, and the magnitude of the sins of man, **the only thing that God would allow to appease him was the suffering and death of the sinless representative of mankind, namely, Christ.** (Robert Sungenis, Founder and President of Catholic Apologetics International Publishing: *Not By Faith Alone* (Santa Barbara: Queenship, 1997), pp. 107-108.)
- We affirm that the atonement of Christ by which, in his obedience, he offered a perfect sacrifice, **propitiating the Father by paying for our sins** and satisfying divine justice on our behalf according to God's eternal plan, is an essential element of the Gospel. (A Call to Evangelical Unity," Christianity Today, June 14, 1999.)
- Paul always speaks of people being reconciled to God (2Cor 5:19; Rom 5:10; Col. 1:20). He never refers to God being reconciled to us. **In spite of that fact**, however, we should recognize that sin affected both sides. Humanity's rebellion and sense of guilt alienated it from God, while **God was separated from humankind by His necessary hatred of and judgment on sin (His wrath). Christ's sacrificial death (propitiation) removed the barrier to reconciliation from God's side.** )Knight, George, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 74.)
- Christ's self-sacrifice is pleasing to God because this sacrificial offering **took away the barrier between God and sinful man** in that **Christ fully bore God's wrath on man's sin.** Through Christ, God's wrath is not turned into love but is turned away from man and borne by Himself. *Seventh-day Adventist Believe* 27, p. 111.
- Why did **God the Father choose** a cross to be the instrument of death? Why did He not choose to have Christ instantly beheaded or quickly run through with a spear or sword? **Was God unjust in executing judgment on Christ with a cross** when He could have done it by



beheading, a noose, a sword, a gas chamber, a bolt of lightning, or a lethal injection?  
Whidden, W., *Ministry Magazine*, February 2007.

<http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2007/February/sinners-in-the-hands-of-god.html>

- One of the fundamental problems of the Moral Influence Theory is that it rejects the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. The idea that **God had to kill the innocent** instead of the guilty in order to save us is considered a violation of justice. (emphasis mine) Rodriguez, A., *Adventist World Review*, December 2007; p. 40.

Do you see the imposed law lie woven into all of these statements? The idea that God's law functions like human law puts God into the role of executioner, the source of pain, suffering, and death inflicted because of rule-breaking.

But when we return to worshipping God as Creator, we recognize His laws are the protocols upon which reality is built and that sin is the source of pain, suffering, and death, not God. God is the source of goodness, life, health, and happiness and God's laws are the basis of such health and happiness. "The law of the Lord is perfect giving life to the soul" Psalm 19:7.

When we understand God's law is design law then we understand God is always good and God has been working through Jesus for the elimination of all deviations from His design, the elimination of sin and the restoration of His law in us, the restoration to righteousness or rightness which is the restoration to life. But if we refuse God, then God gives us up to our choice, which is separation from Him who is the source of life, and the result is ruin and death. This is the right Biblical understanding of God's wrath. This is what Paul says in Romans 1:18-32:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

28 Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife,



deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. (Ro 1:18–32 NIV84).

Are we seeing this today? This passage is not talking biological conditions that sin brings upon the world. Jesus answered that question when His disciples asked who sinned that the man was born blind, him or his parents and Jesus answered neither. This passage is not talking about people born with biological conditions such as intersex conditions Klinefelter's, Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, hermaphrodites and many others. No, this passage is talking about people who *exchange* and *abandon* the natural for the unnatural, people who started out life with normal, godly, natural desires and through rejection of God, rejection of truth, preferring false worship, and the pleasures of this world debased themselves and changed the natural God-designed relationships for the unnatural and perverse.

And God's wrath is exactly what it has always been, after every effort to reach people with love, truth, mercy, grace, forgiveness, and redeeming power, if people insist on going their own rebellious way, God gives them up to reap what they have chosen. It is the only action love can take. But because those actions are in violation of the laws upon which God constructed life and health to operate they will only destroy themselves.

From the Bible commentary *Hard Sayings of the Bible* published by Intervarsity Press we read the following about this section of Romans and God's wrath:

In some sense, God's wrath is built into the very structure of created reality. In rejecting God's structure and establishing our own, in violating God's intention for the creation and substituting our own intentions, we cause or own disintegration. P 542

The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, is not something caused by God. The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the inevitability of human debasement which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated. Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18-20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21-22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24-27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28-32). P 543

The expression "God gave them over" (or "handed them over"), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24,26,28), supports the idea that the sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, is to be understood ultimately as God's punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves. P 543



In light of these reflections, the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained... God loves us with an everlasting love. But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death. P 543 (Kaiser, W., et al., *Hard Saying of the Bible*, Intervarsity Press, 1996).

So, do we see how exchanging the truth about God's law for the lie that God's law functions like human law, that people can still think of God as mean and stingy despite sending Jesus as our Savior?

## MONDAY

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The lesson quotes John 14:14 "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

Do you believe this? Is it true?

If you pray, and end your prayer by saying, "In Jesus name" and ask that you win the next lottery, will Jesus do this for you? Will Jesus do anything we ask in His name?

Is it possible we don't understand the meaning of praying in Jesus' name?

The lesson goes on to note that this promise of Jesus is the reason we end our prayers "In Jesus' name" and asks "When we say this, what do we normally think it means?"

What does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus?

In the Bible what do names represent? Character, so to pray in Jesus' name isn't about putting a verbal tag at the end of our prayers, it is about praying with the character of Christ.

Now, if we are praying with a heart that has been renewed to be like Jesus in character, what kinds of things will we pray for? For God's will to be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Can we be sure that God will do His will if we ask Him?

Read the third paragraph, "When our request..." Are you encouraged to think about the entire power of heaven, with all of its agencies going into action to answer our godly prayers? Can you think of any examples from Scripture?

I really like Daniel chapter 10 when Daniel prayed for the fulfilling of Jeremiah's prophecy of setting the captive free after 70 years. Daniel prays and fasts for 21 days and then Gabriel comes and tells him that as soon as Daniel started praying 21 days earlier he was dispatched from heaven to go to the king of Persia, but Gabriel was being opposed by the prince of Persia. Gabriel says he can't stay long to explain this because the prince of Greece was coming to help the prince of Persian in opposing Gabriel, and Gabriel doesn't have anyone to help him except Michael.





What does all of this mean?

- When we pray with Christlike motives heaven answers
- There are real intelligent beings, angels, on our side working to oppose Satan and his fallen angels
- Who are the princes of Persia and Greece? These are fallen angels working under the command of Satan, who the Bible calls the prince of the world.
- How many of the angels rebelled with Lucifer? 1/3, then why is it, if heaven as a 2 to 1 advantage in angels, there is no one left to help Gabriel except Michael?
- What kind of warfare is this? Were Gabriel and the princes of Persia and Greece engaged in physical warfare?
- 2 Cor 10:3-5 it is war for hearts and minds, it is a battle of truth versus lies, love versus selfishness, freedom versus coercion. Gabriel is the angel who became covering cherub occupying the place that Lucifer abandoned. In the created order Gabriel stands closest to God and there is not another angel with greater understanding of the truth and love of God than Gabriel. So there is no other angel that can bring more truth and love to bear than Gabriel—it isn't about numbers it is about truth and love. So only Michael, the prince, the one whose voice raises the dead, the one who holds the keys to death and the grave, the angel of the Lord who spoke to Moses in the bush in Exodus 3 and who the Bible says is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is Jesus in His pre-incarnate form. Only Jesus can bring more truth and love to bear than Gabriel.
- Let's be clear here, we are not suggesting Jesus is an angel or a created being. Absolutely not, Jesus is fully God, pre-existent, fully divine, with life original, unborrowed and underived from another source. We are suggesting that Jesus prior to incarnation manifested in the form of an angel and this is supported throughout Scripture. He did this because finite beings, including angels, cannot enter into infinity where God lives in unapproachable light, so one member of the Godhead left infinity to interact with His intelligent creatures on their level. That member was and is Jesus.

## **TUESDAY**

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Read first paragraph, "The Resurrection addresses..." It is absolutely true that we as humans do not have the power over death, we are powerless to stop it. We are not the source of life. We cannot speak things into existence. We cannot cure the sin problem. We cannot destroy death and bring life and immortality to light.

Life originates in God and is sustained by God and God alone.

But what do you think of this idea that the death of Jesus made us legally right with God?

Is the sin problem a legal problem?



When Adam and Eve sinned were they still faithful, holy, pure, righteous beings who merely had a legal problem with God, or were they changed in some way?

If the sin problem is a legal problem what happens if we don't get the proper legal solution?

What is a legalist? Someone who is preoccupied with their legal standing—this statement is legalism, and it is based upon the Roman view of God's law that God's law functions like human law.

The reality is that God is the Creator, His law are the protocols upon which life is built and sin transgresses God's law and changes the sinner from a state of holiness and life to unholiness and death.

As Scripture teaches that we are dead in trespass and sin. We have a terminal condition which we inherited from Adam and that without remedy results in death. But God did not leave us without Remedy. He sent Jesus, who while we were still sinners died for us in order to procure the solution, a cure, a remedy, that we could never provide for ourselves. And if we surrender in love and trust to Jesus, the Spirit takes that remedy and cure and instills it in us. There are many metaphors for this in Scripture note what they describe:

- Circumcision of the heart by the Spirit
- Removing the hard stony heart and putting in a tender heart
- Rebirth
- Renewal
- Dying to the old life and arising to a new life
- Having the mind of Christ
- Our old self no longer living but Christ living in us
- Writing the law in our hearts and minds

What do all of these descriptions functionally describe? Do they describe a legal process or a renewing, healing, transforming process?

You will not find the human law court system of theology in Scripture—some might immediately object and say, what about Zechariah and the high priest standing before God and being accused by Satan.

Great example, just read the story and ask what is happening. Is there any legal process going on at all, or is there a healing and renewal process with the rejection of the legal attacks made by Satan? The angel of the Lord is directed to take away the sin of the high priest and clothe him in righteousness, this is healing and the Lord rejects and rebukes the legal attacks of Satan.

We must stop presenting Satan's view of law and Satan's perversion of the plan of salvation that ultimately makes God out to be like Satan in character, the source of pain, suffering, and death.





Read the second paragraph, “However, the Resurrection...” What of this idea that the Resurrection placed Jesus at the right hand of the Father in a position of power and authority?

Was Jesus not in that position before His incarnation, sinless life, death and resurrection? Is this just a typographical error and they left out the phrase “in His human incarnated form” at the right hand of the Father?

I certainly agree that Jesus took His humanity back to heaven and Jesus is the second Adam and because of His victory over sin and Satan, Jesus, as a human, stands at the right hand of the Father. If that is what they meant then I agree completely. But I wouldn't want to say that Jesus the Son of God was not already at the right hand of the Father before His incarnation.

The lessons asks us to read Ephesians 1:18-23:

“I also pray that your reasoning abilities and conscience may be healed so that you can discern and understand God's purpose for all humanity — the incredible, rich inheritance in store for his children —and God's incomparable power to heal and restore all who trust him. That life-giving power was seen as the outworking of his true strength, which he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in heaven, above all power, rulers and authority, above all other kingdoms, empires or governments, and above every title that can be given—now and forever. And God placed everything under Christ's governance and appointed him the Supreme Head over all creation, including the church—his body, the showcase of his character—which he fills with every blessing and ability” (Ephesians 1:18-23 REM).

What is the message in this passage?

Read last paragraph, “But Paul doesn't...” Didn't Jesus have the **power** to rule before the resurrection? Didn't Jesus have the **right** to rule before His resurrection? What didn't Jesus have before His incarnation, sinless life, death on the cross and resurrection, that we need?

“Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Hebrews 5:8-9 NIV84).

Why did Jesus have to learn obedience? This is talking about His humanity, not His divinity. Jesus came to fix what Adam broke. Jesus took up humanity damaged by Adam and the generations of sin and overcame all that damage and carried humanity back into sinless perfection. In the person of Jesus, exercising only human abilities, not divine abilities, Jesus overcame every temptation, loved perfectly, chose with a human brain to trust His Father and give His life in love despite being tempted with human emotions and the drives of me-first survival of the fittest that urged Him to save self. And thereby, at the Gethsemane and the Cross Jesus destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light by destroying the law of sin and death, the carnal drives, fear and selfishness infecting the species, and restoring God's living law of love back into the species human. Thus He became the source of salvation for all who obey Him.



When we are won to trust and open the heart this victory of Jesus is given to us as gift, we get peace with God in our hearts, our fear goes away, we get new desires and new motives that we must choose to act upon and when we do we grow and mature in those desires and motives and develop godly character. But the motives, desires, and power to succeed are all from Jesus, the choice to trust, the choice to apply the truth, and the choice to act come from us, but the victory that enables all of this comes from Jesus and Jesus alone.

## WEDNESDAY

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Read second paragraph, “Someone once said...” Why do we wait often to go to the Lord until we are overwhelmed and feel helpless?

- Worry about future events and issues that is not ours to worry about—ours is to choose in governance of self what we know is right, healthy, and reasonable and trust God with how things turn out
- Not wanting to accept certain things or outcomes, especially when we see things going ways that cause us emotional distress
- Trying to avoid some pain, seeking an easier way. Deciding based on how it feels rather than on whether it is right and healthy.
- Concern about being negligent, in other words, not wanting to ask God for help because we don’t want to be presumptuous, or to bother God with things that we think are insignificant. We are conscientious and want to do our part and sometimes we overreach and try to do things that we should first seek God’s directions and counsel before pursuing. Like David building a temple.

Read the fourth paragraph, “Anxiety is caused by all sorts of things...” This is right. Anxiety is a symptom and should be considered a signal to the mind that something is wrong in a similar way that pain is a signal that something is wrong with the body.

If you get physical pain the first response should not be “I have a pain disorder and need pain medicine.” The first response should be, what is causing the pain and the second is, what do I need to do to resolve the cause. Is the pain from a thorn, touching something hot, a cramp, etc.

Likewise, anxiety signals that something is wrong and the first question should be, what is the cause of the anxiety, and the second, how to I resolve it. Anxiety can come from:

- Physical causes—hormone problems/sleep problems/substances etc.
- Relationship problems
- Psychological problems
- Spiritual problems
- Real world threats
- Financial problems
- Being overwhelmed with too many legitimate responsibilities
- Trauma



It is a mistake to treat the symptom of anxiety with a single intervention, whether that intervention is medication or prayer.

Read the last paragraph, “Whatever the reasons...” What about the question “Does God still care enough to intervene when a divorce is looming?” And then the lesson states, “The Bible states that He cares enough to transform any situation.”

Is it true that God cares enough to transform any situation? Yes, it is absolutely true that God cares, but could this statement lead to misunderstanding, such as: If God cares, and He doesn’t transform the situation, then that means He either wanted the divorce, or the abuse, or the murder or rape or whatever other evil transpired, or He isn’t powerful enough to transform it.

This is the problem many have, with leaving a statement like this in isolation.

But in order for God to transform a marriage, what type of intervention are we talking about?

Healthy relationships require healthy people. What happened to the relationship between Jesus and Judas? It ended in betrayal—did God not care enough to intervene? Of course He did, and He intervened directly by washing Judas dirty feet, by protecting Judas’s reputation etc. But God’s interventions don’t take away our freewill and thus when it comes to relationships God cannot fix the relationship, what God can do is heal the hearts and minds of the individuals in the relationships IF they let God into their hearts and then the relationships improve as the people improve. But if people close their hearts to God, then God cannot fix the relationship.

## **THURSDAY**

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The lesson asks about how you would describe God to people who feel that God has disappeared and abandoned them?

## **FRIDAY**

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The lesson quotes E.G. White who wrote, “Faith grows strong by coming in conflict with doubts and opposing influences. The experience gained in these trials is of more value than the most costly jewels” 3T p. 555.

Do you see a design law involved? The law of exertion—if we want to grow stronger we must exercise the ability for if we don’t use it we lose it. Thus, faith grows stronger as we face various conflicts, trials, doubts, and opposition, but stand firm in our faith, following the truth and trusting God.



## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

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**August 13, 2022:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Sligo by the Sea, sponsored by Sligo SDA church at the First Presbyterian Church — 1301 Philadelphia Avenue, Ocean City, MD 21842. Dr. Jennings will lead SS at 10 a.m., sermon at 11 a.m. and have Q&A session in the afternoon.

**September 8-10, 2022:** Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at <https://nationalaacc.com/>